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ABSTRACT

This study investigated whether there would be a relationship between teacher candidates' pre-admission goal statements and their subsequent performance as intern teachers. Researchers examined graduate-level preservice teachers' personal motivations and interests in applying to be teachers with the Alliance for Catholic Education (which is based on faith, teaching, and service and offers 2 years of intern teaching experience in Catholic schools). They also asked students how the Alliance fit with their personal goals and what experiences, skills, and aptitudes they would bring to teaching. They compared student teachers' responses to university supervisors' and principals' ratings of teaching performance to determine if any patterns or themes existed. Analysis of data from student teachers rated effective and less effective indicated that more effective intern teachers clearly identified career goals of becoming teachers and possessed prior successful experiences as teachers. Less effective interns considered teaching a path of service to God and others, and they did not have any appreciable experience. The researchers conclude that admissions to graduate teacher education programs should not be based solely on previous academic performance or test scores. An appendix presents the principal/supervisor rating scale. (Contains 18 references. (SM)

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The Goals of Effective Pre-service Teacher Education Candidates: A Longitudinal Study

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by Blaine C. Ackley & Ellyn L. Arwood

A paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association on Friday, April 23 in Montreal, Canada

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The Goals of Effective Preservice Teacher Education Candidates:

A Longitudinal Study

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In reviewing graduate admissions records to our off-campus Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program, we wondered whether there was a relationship between a candidate's pre-admission goal statements and their subsequent performance as intern teachers?

The conclusions of our study indicate that admissions to graduate teacher education programs should not be based solely on previous academic performance or test scores. We recommend that admissions officials should also consider other factors. Applicants who have a long held occupational vision of themselves as teachers and who have had one or more previously successful experiences teaching groups of young people in classroom like settings, will become more successful beginning intern teachers than other applicants who do not have such experiences in their background. On this basis, we advise teacher education admissions officers to establish methods to identify such applicants during the application process.

Background

For the past four years the University of Portland School of Education has participated in a unique alternative teacher education effort. The program is entitled the Alliance for Catholic Education (ACE). It is a collaborative effort between the University of Portland, the University of Notre Dame, and the National Catholic Education Association. The three main tenets of the program are faith, teaching, and service.

The ACE program tries to attract the best recent undergraduates to the teaching profession by offering two years of intern teaching experience in Catholic schools in the South and Southwest. There is a two-year service and study commitment. When students successfully complete the two year internship, they earn a Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) degree from the University of Portland. The fourth and last cohort enrolled in the academic program of the University of Portland is now entering their final year of study. Beginning in the summer of 1998, the fifth class admitted to ACE began their studies enrolled as students of the University of Notre Dame's recently established Institute for Education.

The admissions process requires candidates to write goal statements about their personal reasons for wishing to gain admission to the program. Because ACE has only been in operation for four years, we have confined our study to the data from the first two cohort groups (ACE I and ACE II) who have completed the program. Fifty-nine intern teachers have graduated with MAT degrees in the first three years of the

program. We wanted to determine if the pre-admission data might offer some relationship to the intern teachers' performance.

The ACE application process requires all applicants to complete a thorough application packet. Applicants submit three letters of recommendation and essay answers to two personal goals questions with their applications for admission. Upon receiving the completed application packet, members of the ACE staff personally interview each candidate in both an individual and a group interview.

After volunteers have been invited to become part of the ACE program, they must be accepted into the graduate MAT program of the University of Portland. Before the University of Portland will consider the applicants for acceptance into the academic program, each applicant must submit passing scores on either the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) or the Miller Analogies Test (MAT). Upon reviewing admissions records, we noticed that eleven students in the ACE I and ACE II groups gained admission under a "matrix" or "exceptional" status. A student is granted admission under a matrix status when either the undergraduate GPA is below 3.0 or the score on the Millers or GRE is lower than standard. For example, a student with a high undergraduate GPA but a low Millers or GRE score would be admitted under a "matrix" status. A student is granted admission under an exception when the GPA and the test score are both below standards but some other circumstance such as outstanding letters of recommendation or a superior interview suggests that the student will successfully complete graduate school. But a student who completes graduate school may not be an effective intern

teacher. We originally began this research to confirm our suspicion that a significant number of effective intern teachers had been admitted on a matrix or exception basis. We also noted the converse was true. Some of the highest scoring applicants on the GRE or GPA scales were not effective intern teachers.

Prior Research

Although there is some research about preservice teacher education candidate's beliefs and attitudes (Book & Freeman, 1986; Brookhart & Freeman, 1992) there is little research about the relationship (if any) between candidate's pre-admission beliefs and attitudes and their student teaching or intern teaching performances (Shechtman & Godfried, 1993; Sears, Marshall & Otis-Wilborn, 1994). There is further opinion (Howey & Zimpher, 1989), court decisions (Hammes, 1985), and research available concerning the correlation (if any) between scores on various tests (CBEST, PPST, ACT, NTE) and other diagnostic instruments in relation to successful teaching performance (Dobry, Murphy & Schmidt, 1985; Howey & Strom, 1987; Freeman & Schopen, 1991).

Freeman and Schopen (1991) noted (and common sense suggests) that it is crucial to use multiple measures to predict future performance but they found that, "no data exist supporting the notion that any of the teacher admissions tools actualiy predict teacher performance" (p.281). A 1989 review of the literature concluded that neither

admissions tests nor GPA had even a negligible relationship to effective teaching performance (Westerman, 1989).

In their study of teacher education programs, Howey & Zimpher (1989) noted that "rarely did we see strands focused specifically on the *moral* and *ethical* dimensions of what is a highly moral endeavor" (p. 258). In describing a program much like the ACE program, Sears et. al., note that one of the most valued qualities in a teacher is the desire to provide service to young people. Sears et. al. (1994) suggested that,

> "Teaching is a moral craft with social and political consequences. However, developing the necessary dispositions or characteristics like those above are in the short period of time available in teacher preparation programs is not possible. Individuals must come to teacher preparation programs with those dispositions and characteristics." (p. 57)

In another national study of teacher education, Goodlad (1990) noted in interviewing students enrolled in the programs he visited,

> "The idea of moral imperatives for teachers was virtually foreign in concept and strange in language for most of the future teachers we interviewed." (p. 264)

This would suggest that the only way for teacher preparation programs to attract candidates who have high moral and ethical standards is through pre-admission screening. Though he does not specify interview protocols, Haberman (1991) suggests

using valid and reliable interview techniques during the admissions process for teacher education candidates.

In a rigorous study of the predictive validity of a group interview process at the University of Haifa in Israel, Shechtman & Godfried (1993) found a high, positive correlation between individual scores during a three step group interview process and later initial teaching success. Shechtman & Godfried remarked,

> "It is long past time to depart from the traditional admissions criteria, often justified by the excuse that not better methods are available. . . The Group Assessment procedure we examined here . . . appears to successfully evaluate these (attributes of effective teachers) and other relevant behavior of effective teachers." (pgs.136-137)

We wondered if the answers to the two goal questions that applicants must submit with their ACE applications would help us discern if the applicant had the necessary moral, ethical, and professional pre-dispositions and characteristics necessary for successful teaching experience.

Methodology

We reviewed intern teachers' responses to the following two questions in relation to university supervisor's and principal's ratings of teaching performance to determine if any patterns or themes existed (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Question 1 – Discuss your personal motivations and interests in applying to be a teacher with the Alliance for Catholic Education. How does the program seem to fit with your personal and vocational goals? Discuss in this context your willingness and ability to live in a small community with others, and your own faith and how it relates to your interest in this program.

Question 2 – What experiences, skills or aptitudes would you bring to your position as teacher? Describe experiences that you feel have prepared you to work effectively with students of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. What do you have to offer them in terms of their education and personal development?

We used university supervisor's and principal's subjective ratings of the intern teachers teaching performance in the areas of classroom management, student-teacher interactions, and students' active engagement in learning to determine an effective teaching rating for each of the interns in our study (see Appendix A). Using these performance ratings, we found that among the 58 total graduates of the ACE I and ACE II intern teachers, there were eleven of the teacher interns who had been admitted to the program under a matrix or exception admission status who were also rated as effective teachers by their supervisors and principals. In order to test our supposition that a significant number of matrix or exception admissions to the program were also effective intern teachers, we decided to examine the data from the total of ten other intern teachers whose teaching performance was rated as ineffective by their clinical

supervisors and principals. Thus, we selected the responses of 21 of the 58 intern teachers for further analysis.

Analysis

When candidates are applying to a clearly religiously affiliated program like ACE, we assumed that, in reviewing the candidate's goal statements we would find references to God in almost all the responses we reviewed. We confirmed this supposition in our review of the goal statements. All responses also included applicant's beliefs about serving God by serving other people.

Differences and patterns clearly began to emerge when we reviewed intern's statements about their reasons for applying to the program. Those candidates whom we rated as effective intern teachers clearly identified a career goal of becoming teachers and they possessed prior successful experiences as teachers. For example, Sarah said in her application, "Knowing that I have played some part in that child's experience of their ability and worth has given me joy that can only come when a person experiences a sense of calling." Or Stan, who was quite explicit in his response when he stated, "I have wanted to become a teacher since I switched my major from engineering to mathematics after my sophomore year." Karen said it most simply, "I have always wanted to become a teacher."

The less effective teachers found teaching as a path of service to God and others. Teaching was not a career path that they had previously considered or a path for which they any appreciable experience. For example, Randy had an amorphous desire to ". . . help others in some fashion." Or Monica, who stated, "I am drawn by my faith to participate in a year of service after graduation." Or Roger who said, "I strive to make service a prominent part of my life." Most of the less effective teachers had a multitude and variety of previous experiences with young people but not one of the interns from the less effective teacher group had previous direct teaching experience with a group of young people in a classroom setting. For one young man in this group, teaching came as a "revelation" to him. From the above quotations, you can discern the marked differences in the response patterns to the two essay questions for each of the individuals in the "effective" and "less effective" teacher groups. (Refer to Table 1)

With this evidence, we decided that we had better examine the records of the remaining intern teachers who had gained regular admission into the MAT program. Records were not complete for all the remaining teacher interns but we did find a total of 18 of 19 complete records for the ACE I group. Examining these records in careful detail, we found we could rate 15 of those 18 teachers as "effective" and three as "less effective" according to our standards (please refer to the Methodology section). Of the 15 intern teachers whom we rated as "effective", 14 had an early desire to become teachers and had successful experience as a teacher in a classroom teacher. Other factors in the "effective" interns' decisions to pursue a teacher career were service (8),

the opportunity to have a positive impact on children (3) and because they were "called" to teach (2). (Refer to Table 2).

In contrast, of the three regularly admitted ACE I teachers we rated as "less effective", only one of them had ever considered teaching as a career. For all three of "ineffective" teachers, their primary motivations for entering the program was service to others and service to God. (Refer to Table 3)

Then, we attempted to find complete records for those interns who had received regular admissions to the ACE II cohort group. We were able to find complete records for 30 of 35 intern teachers. We rated 25 of these teachers as "effective" and five of these teachers as "less effective". A careful review of their records revealed the same pattern found in the ACE I group. We found that 22 of the 25 "effective" teachers had an early desire to become teachers and 24 of the 25 had a previous successful classroom teaching experience (Refer to Table 3).

An examination of the five "ineffective teachers" from the ACE II cohort did provide us with some differences from our ACE I group however. Three of the five had wanted to become teachers and two of that number had a previously successful classroom teaching experience. However, when we examined the other motivating factors in their decision to become teachers, three of them felt as if they had received a calling to the profession from God and the two others felt teaching was a service to God and their

faith. This pattern of other motivating factors is in clear agreement with the pattern of other motivating factors from the other "less effective" teachers in the ACE I group.

More telling are some statements taken from the goals essays of these "less effective" teachers. Sally related, "It is difficult (for me) to distinguish my personal, spiritual, and vocational goals for they are so closely intertwined." Or Melissa, who said, "To serve in a Christian capacity, I am trying to determine if teaching is my vocation." Or, John who related, "It is both my moral and religious obligation to do for others (to teach) what others have done for me." Although each of these three "less effective" intern teachers had a previous desire to become a teacher (and two of them had previous teaching experience that lacked a classroom atmosphere), they had apparently envisioned teaching as an avenue leading them toward service and assisting them in discovering if teaching was a viable vocation for them.

Discussion

Through this circuitous route we discovered the importance of biodata is part of an emerging or evolving pattern that is suggested by Smith and Pratt (1996). Other research (Westerman, 1989) also confirms our finding that previous academic performance as measured by grade point alone is not a reliable indicator of effective teaching performance. The service or altruistic and intrinsic sources of motivation for teaching identified by the intern teachers in our study conforms to the norm Brookhart & Freeman (1992) found in their review of the literature.

Our findings support the idea expressed by Smith and Pratt (1996) that admissions standards to teacher education programs need to be equally weighted between previous academic performance and previous personal teaching experience. Our findings further extend the notion advanced by Smith and Pratt (1996) that success in teacher education programs has not been threatened but enhanced through the use of personal statements in the application process. In fact, we believe our findings should serve to extend this idea with a specific recommendation. If applicants have a long held occupational vision of themselves as teachers and they have had one or more previously successful experiences teaching groups of young people in classroom like settings, teacher education admissions officers should give serious consideration to such students for admission to their programs. In our view, a person's goals and successful classroom teaching experience should carry at least equal weight in comparison to other admissions criteria such as GPA and/or GRE scores.

Our findings also support the notion that prior experience with children is important but working with children in a classroom teaching situation and having a clearly identified goal of becoming a teacher should carry greater weight in gaining admission to graduate teacher education programs. In our view, these considerations are not matters for pre-admission checklists but should be included as items to completed by the applicant in the formal application for admission and confirmed at a later time through personal interviews.

Because pre-admissions questions about moral and ethical issues are an integral part of the ACE program and because a person's moral and ethical character are so important to teaching, we also suggest that admissions procedures should include some explicit indication of a candidate's moral and ethical predispositions and characteristics.

The task for future researchers is to test our findings in their own programs to discern if the initial goals and/or moral/ethical characteristics of candidates for admission to a teacher education programs have any relationship to effective teaching performance. We are encouraged by the growing body of practical research concerning the utility of admissions standards and practices for teacher education programs.

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Table 1

ACE I and ACE II Intern Teachers' Motivations and Experience for Teaching

for those admitted under Matrix and Exception Status

	Success in Previous Teaching	Wanted to be a Teacher	Service to Others	Positive Impact on Students	Service to God	A calling to teach
Effective Teachers N=12	11	11	8	3	1	1
Less Effective Teachers N=3		1	1	1	1	1

Table 2

ACE I Regularly Admitted Intern Teachers'

Motivations and Experience for Teaching

	Success in Previous Teaching	Wanted to be a Teacher	Service to Others	Positive Impact on Students	Service to God	A calling to teach
Effective Teachers N=15	13	14	8	3	1	2
Less Effective Teachers N=3	1	1	3	1	3	1

Table 3

ACE II Regularly Admitted Intern Teachers'

Motivations and Experience for Teaching

	Success in Previous Teaching	Wanted to be a Teacher	Service to Others	Positive Impact on Students	Service to God	A calling to teach
Effective Teachers N=25	24	22	9	3	5	2
Less Effective Teachers N=5	2	3	3	0	2	3

Appendix A

The Principals and Supervisors used the following rating scale to make a subjective judgement about teacher effectiveness in classroom management, student-teacher interactions, and students' active engagement in learning.

We rated those teachers who had predominant (and in most cases, unanimous) ratings in the following three categories as "effective teachers".

Exemplary – Few issues, no major concerns because teacher recognizes these issues and has already taken steps to implement changes.

Very Good – Some issues, teacher recognizes issues and is attempting to implement changes.

Good – Some issues, teacher recognizes issues and is planning to make changes.

We rated those teachers who had predominant (and in most cases, unanimous) ratings in the following two categories as "less effective teachers".

Average – Major issues, teacher needs assistance in recognizing and responding to these issues.

Needs Improvement – Major issues, teacher does not recognize issues and/or resists to reflect upon possible changes.